




Public Health Soil Safety Guidelines for Metals-Polluted Soil

Pend Oreille, Stevens, and Ferry Counties

Although adults do not usually eat soil, or breathe in soil on purpose, you do take in small amounts of soil and dust as you touch, breathe and swallow. Following these guidelines will help keep your family healthier. Dirt and dust can become polluted with metals such as lead and arsenic by past industrial practices, such as metal smelting. Children are particularly at risk from lead and other pollution. So encourage your family to follow soil safety guidelines to reduce the amount of dirt and dust you inhale and ingest.

Inside your home:

- Remove or leave shoes outside your home to avoid tracking in polluted soil.
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- Wash hands and face thoroughly after working or playing in the soil, especially before cooking or eating.
- Use soap and water to wash — avoid “waterless” soaps.
- Damp mop and wipe surfaces often to control dust.
- Wash toddler toys and pacifiers often.
- Scrub vegetables and fruits with soap and water.
- After working in areas you know or believe have lead pollution in the soil, wash dirty clothes separately from other clothes.
- Repair painted surfaces in homes. Homes built before 1980 may contain lead-based paint. Older paint flakes may also be a source of lead.
- Eat a balanced diet. Iron and calcium help keep lead from becoming a problem in the body.

Outside your home:

- Keep children from playing in dirt you know is polluted with metals.
- Cover bare patches of dirt with bark, sod, decking, or other materials, or fence off areas if you know they're polluted with metals.
- Dampen dusty soils before gardening or digging so you don't breathe in the dust.
- Wear gardening gloves.
- Do not eat or drink in metals polluted areas.
- Grow your fruit and vegetables in raised beds with clean soil, or mix plenty of compost and other amendments in your garden soil to decrease the amount of pollution in the soil. Avoid railroad ties or pressure treated lumber, they can contain chemicals that pollute soil.
- Do not plant food crops under the roof overhang of your home, where pollution may accumulate.
- Be aware that pets can track polluted dirt into the house on their fur and paws.

Some soils in Pend Oreille, Stevens and Ferry Counties are polluted with metals such as arsenic and lead.

Lead and arsenic are harmful and can cause health problems. While not easily absorbed by the skin, these metals can enter the body when small amounts are eaten or breathed. Young children are the most vulnerable. *If you have young children, talk to their pediatrician about a simple blood-lead test.*

For more information on health related questions please contact the Northeast Tri County Health District:

☎ 509-684-2262

🌐 <http://www.netchd.org>

Text of this document is sourced from the Seattle and King County public health guidelines. Visit

🌐 http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/area_wide/AW/Public%20Health%20S&K.pdf